



## **HEALTH ADVISORY #62**

### **NOROVIRUS OUTBREAKS**

**TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities**

**FROM: Marian L. Swinker, MD, MPH, Commissioner for Public Health and State Health Officer, WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health**

**DATE: 02/22/12**

**LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

**OTHER RECIPIENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

Since December 2011, there were 46 confirmed outbreaks of acute gastrointestinal illness in West Virginia. Over 20 were caused by Norovirus and most were reported in healthcare facilities. To help facilities manage these outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness, the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) offers a “toolkit” which includes information regarding the reporting and handling of these outbreaks as well as control measures. This “toolkit” can be found on the DIDE website <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/OEPS/DISEASE/FNW/VIRAL/Pages/Norovirus.aspx>. WV Office of Laboratory Services provides testing for Norovirus in outbreak settings. If you suspect an outbreak of Norovirus, please consult your local health department regarding testing and management.

Symptoms of Norovirus illness are: sudden onset of vomiting (more common in children), watery non-bloody diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and low-grade fever (occasionally). The usual duration of illness is 24 to 60 hours and recovery is the norm. Dehydration is the most common complication, usually in the young and elderly. Symptoms usually begin 12 to 48 hours after exposure. Infected persons are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days after recovery. Long-term immunity does not develop. There is no treatment other than keeping the patient well hydrated.

Noroviruses are highly contagious and transmitted primarily through the fecal-oral route, either by direct person-to-person spread or contaminated food or water. Noroviruses can also spread via a droplet route from vomitus. Often in healthcare facilities, the transmission occurs from the contaminated hands of healthcare workers; therefore hand hygiene is paramount to control the spread of disease.

Reporting of outbreaks, is required from health care facilities/providers, schools and camps. Report outbreaks immediately to your local health department. For further information visit the DIDE website at ([www.dide.wv.gov](http://www.dide.wv.gov)) or contact DIDE at 304-558-5358 or 800-423-1271 (in WV).

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

**Categories of Health Alert messages:**

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance, warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation. Unlikely to require immediate action.